Division and Unification: Seen through the Eyes of Korean Migrants in Berlin

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Jin-Heon Jung & Eun-Jeung Lee *

Abstract: *»Teilung und Vereinigung, aus Sicht von koreanischen Migranten in Berlin«*. Based on qualitative fieldwork among first generation Korean immigrants in Berlin, this article sheds light on their lived experiences of German division and unification. Our research questions are threefold; first, how do these immigrants from the divided Korea perceive the division and unification of Germany? Second, did the fact that the division of Germany could be overcome affect their views on the division and unification of the Korean Peninsula? Third, are there any differences between Koreans in Germany and Koreans in Korea with respect to their views on unification? Our research suggests that different from South Korea, where the discourses in the media and the academia tend to assume sharply antagonistic attitudes, discourses among Koreans in Germany are generally much more supportive of unification. This is because they have a positive perception of German unification in everyday life and, furthermore, have constructed for themselves a future-oriented identity as a people of the Korean Peninsula that will eventually be unified. Korean immigrants in Germany are considerably more optimistic about the possibility of Korean unification than people in South Korea.

Keywords: German Unification, Korean migrants, German Korean comparison, future.

1. Introduction

The year 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of the Berlin Wall's collapse. Koreans walking along the remains of the Berlin Wall naturally think of the metal fence that stretches across the waist of the Korean Peninsula. Koreans still have to endure the pain of division and think of Germany as special because it has realized the dream of unification. As a result, Germany has a special place in

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Korean people's hearts and is the home for around 30,000 Korean immigrants.[1] The number of Korean immigrants pale in comparison to the number of Turkish or Vietnamese immigrants in the country; however, they are considered a migrant group that has settled relatively successfully into German society (Kaiser 2013). What do Korean migrants think about "division and unification," given that they came to West Germany when it was divided and then experienced both German unification and 30 years of German integration? Has their experience of knowing that division can be overcome impacted how they view the division and unification of the Korean Peninsula? How do their perspectives on unification differ from Koreans who live in South Korea? This study sought seeks to find answers to these questions through in-depth conducted with first-generation Korean immigrants living in Berlin, Germany.

These questions are relevant due to the discourse about German reunification in South Korea being characterized by the concept of "the other" as discussed in cultural theory. This discourse focuses on German unification, but ultimately the participants in this discourse are projecting their own concept of unification into the discussion. German reunification was a symbol of hope to Koreans that unification could be achieved. Up until the 1997 Asian financial crisis, most South Koreans expected that North Korea would collapse as quickly as East Germany did. The South Korean government and various institutes that conducted research on unification created a range of North Korean collapse scenarios and began to research responses to each of these scenarios as part of their efforts to comprehensively learn about Germany's unification experience.

It soon become very clear, however, that reunified Germany was paying astronomically high costs because of the collapse of the East German economy and, consequently, fears that unification could be an economic burden became widespread in South Korea. South Korean experts competed with each other to announce the "unification costs" they had calculated that the South Korean government would have to pay based on the German government's unification costs. The estimated economic burden that emerged from these specific figures led many South Koreans to ask whether the Korean Peninsula really needed to be unified. Ultimately, South Koreans transitioned from having vague fears toward unification to skepticism about unification altogether.

Thirty years have passed since Germany has reunified and the South Korean discourse on Germany's experience with unification continues to shift back and forth between hope and fear. German unification is still an important topic within discussions on unification in South Korea. Most South Korean politicians, social scientists, and members of the media share their own opinions on

[1] There are almost no North Korean migrants living in Germany. There are only a few North Korean defectors who have been recognized as refugees along with a small number of North Korean foreign exchange students who came to East Germany in the 1960s and escaped to West Germany.

German unification. It is not an overstatement to say that the South Korean government still aims to learn all it can from Germany's unification experience.[2]

South Korea's discourse on German unification, however, is very different from the unification discourse that occurred in Germany. Rai Kollmorgen and Thomas Koch discovered through a systematic analysis of the unification discourse in Germany that there were critical keywords used by different discourse participants. According to their research, the keywords that appeared in Germany's social science sphere included the terms "late modernization" and "the two-sides of drastic change." Meanwhile, the predominant keyword in Germany's political sphere was "the construction of a modern and socialist state." The discourse in Germany's media, moreover, was dominated by four frameworks that defined East Germany and East Germans by "origin, characteristics or differences, weakness, and burden." On the other hand, the discourse on German unification in South Korea after the mid-1990s was defined by keywords such as "unification by absorption, unification costs, unification's aftereffects, and internal integration" (Kollmorgen, Koch, and Dienel 2011).

The focus of the South Korean discourse on German unification was clearly the reunification itself; however, what took on the central role in the formation of this discourse was Korea's historical experiences, realities, political hopes and needs (E. Lee 2014). Of course, Germany's experience did have a role in this discourse. Many South Korean politicians, scholars, and journalists visited Germany to learn about Germany's unification experience, and many German experts were invited to South Korea to talk about German unification. The exchange of all this information likely had some impact on South Korea's discourse on German unification. Nonetheless, the focus of this discourse in South Korea was less on Germany than on unification, and it has always been with the unification of the Korean Peninsula in mind. This discourse in South Korea, therefore, has directly reflected the range of South Korean perspectives toward the unification of the Korean Peninsula. As such, South Korea's discourse on German unification has the characteristics of "the other" as discussed in Orientialism and Occidentialism.

The perspectives toward unification held by South Korean migrants living in Germany are connected to the perspectives of "the other" inherent in South

[2] A great deal of research on German unification has taken place in South Korea. More than 5,000 pieces of research focused on German unification have been presented from the 1990s to the present and major dailies in the country report ceaselessly on Germany's unification and integration. The records of South Korea's National Assembly have had 5,000 mentions of German unification across a range of contexts since the 1990s. All of these different outlets of information have created South Korea's own discourse on Germany unification. See the contributions in the Forum of *Historical Social Research* 41 (2016) 3, available at <https://www.gesis.org/en/hsr/full-text-archive/2016/413-established-outsider-relations/>.

Korea's discourse on German unification; however, this study operates under the assumption that migrants have an understanding of unification that is different from Koreans living in South Korea. This broad assumption has long provided the basis for research on the Korean diaspora. Existing research has found that migrants continue to maintain connections with their places of origin and emphasizes that migrants even have nostalgia for their home countries. As research on Koreans who reside in Japan shows, migrants create their own idea of the future for their home country using the perspectives and opinions they formed through their experiences abroad; moreover, this research has even confirmed that migrants tend to place their own identities in a home country that exists in the future.[3] This study is founded on the assumptions reflected in existing research on the Korean diaspora. The interviews used in this study revealed that, regardless of where they stood on the political spectrum, Korean migrants in Germany naturally believed that the division of the Korean Peninsula must be overcome. The researchers also found that the migrants thought of themselves as citizens of a future, united Korean Peninsula. Before moving to explain the results of this study, the following section will describe this study's processes, methodologies, and, lastly, the characteristics of the Korean diaspora in Germany, which form the social and cultural backgrounds of interviewees who participated in the study.

2. Research Subjects and Methodology

The main interviewees of this study were first-generation South Koreans who live in Berlin. Most of the female interviewees were sent to West Berlin as nurses or nursing assistants in their early to mid-20s between 1966 and 1976 and experienced the division of Berlin, the process of German unification, and Germany's post-unification period. The majority of male interviewees were sent to West Germany as miners from 1963 and migrated to West Berlin for various reasons, including marriage and for work. The interviewees all experienced Germany before and after unification and their ages ranged from the late 60s to mid-70s at the time of the interviews. All the interviewees had lived in Germany for more than 40 years and had spent two-thirds of their lives residing in a foreign country, meaning that, culturally at least, they had a hybrid identity.[4]

[3] Sonia Ryang (2009) argues that the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon) National School students she studied place their own national identity not in North Korea but in a unified Korean Peninsula.

[4] The concept of hybridity is evolved from the postcolonial theory of Homi Bhabha (1994) to the extent that it refers to the cultural hybridities of transnational migrant people in the

The hybrid identity of migrants refers to the mixture or changes in their knowledge, habits, values, religion, the food they enjoy, the languages they speak, emotional sentiments, and other cultural factors they picked up in their home countries with those of their host society and the process of acquiring multi-faceted perspectives, attitudes, and value systems. Hybridness includes those cases where existing habits and value systems fail to change and instead simply solidify even further. Their home societies may have changed rapidly due to the passage of time, but migrant communities are frequently more conservative in their thinking and habits compared to the societies they left. As such, there is diversity between generations, genders, and individuals within any migrant community. In other words, migrant communities are hybrid, diverse, and dynamic groups.

First-generation Korean migrants in Berlin experienced Western European liberalism, democracy, and multiculturalism. However, most of the migrants had similar or enhanced levels of anti-communist sentiment typical of South Koreans in the 1960s in 1970s. Other migrants had transformed their views to correspond with post-ideological, pan-national, or even pro-North Korean perspectives. In the midst of this deeply divided ideological spectrum, there were many migrants who wanted to become politically detached from the situation on the Korean Peninsula and avoid being placed on the political spectrum.[5]

This article attempts a life-history approach through participant observation and in-depth interviews that conform with on-site anthropological research methodologies. The researchers created a rapport with the migrants while participating in their community activities in Berlin over a long period of time and made efforts to learn their own points of view. The interviews were conducted on the basis of this rapport with the migrants. Apart from formal interviews, the researchers attempted to gather a comprehensive understanding of the interviewees' unique lives and culture. In-depth interviews were conducted with only those migrants who agreed to participate. The mid- to long-term process of participant observation began in 2016 and is still ongoing. The interview data analyzed for this study were collected from approximately 60 interviews conducted from February to August 2016.

multiculturalism studies. See also Vertovec (1997) and Safran (1991) for further discussion about the concept of diasporas.

[5] This may prove that the geopolitical Cold War system of the Korean Peninsula strongly impacts migrant communities, but it is also impossible to ignore the history of state violence perpetrated by South Korea in Germany. The Dongbaekrim Incident (1967-1969) along with European spy ring cases and South Korean agents who, directly and indirectly, incited South Korean migrant communities to move to the political right, among other historical and social factors, have likely led to this kind of political aversion among Korean migrants.

3. South Korean Diaspora in Germany[6]

Germany and South Korea began official diplomatic ties after signing a cooperation agreement in 1883. After the end of World War II in 1945 and German division, East Germany formed a special relationship with North Korea right after its establishment by, among other things, accepting North Korean war orphans in the 1950s. Meanwhile, West Germany formed a close relationship with South Korea's government while concluding an agreement to accept South Korean nurses and miners in 1963. From 1966 to 1976, 10,226 nurses and 7,932 miners were sent to Germany. They formed the first overseas Korean community along with small groups of South Korean students who had studied in West Germany since the 1950s.

Some of these first-generation migrants no longer live in Germany. While there are no accurate statistics available, interviews with migrants suggest that around one-third of the original migrants stayed in Germany while another one-third returned to South Korea after the end of their contracts. The rest migrated again to the United States, Canada, and other parts of North America. The all-encompassing characteristics of these first-generation migrants are that they grew up during the Korean War, experienced poverty, and received intense levels of anti-communist education that taught them to hate communist North Korea. The West Germany they came to was similar to South Korea. Unlike the confrontation that existed between North and South Korea, however, a limited degree of travel was allowed between West and East Germany at the time. South Koreans who lived in West Berlin were able to visit East Berlin. Some of them even visited the North Korean embassy in East Berlin and met with North Korean diplomats. This was, of course, a violation of South Korea's anti-communist laws.[7] In 1967, South Korea's military dictatorship, led by Park Chung Hee, abducted South Koreans living in West Germany in order to bring them back to Seoul and put them on trial. Some were sentenced to death.[8]

[6] The concept of diaspora used to refer to the Jewish communities dispersed across regions in the past. But as the transnational migrations increased, it became more inclusive to denote the ethnic groups of the people who settle down in new host societies. See Clifford (1994) for more discussions.

[7] You Jae Lee (2018) re-examines the East Berlin Incident and points out that the South Korean militant regime failed to consider a different sense of spatiotemporality of the Cold War that the South Korean migrants in Germany came to experience in the context of the transnational migration. It is fair to say that the state power dominated the foreign monetary funding from Germany and controlled the grassroots transnationalism as an excuse derived from the national division. In other words, the East Berlin Incident reveals an anachronistic ignorance of the state power.

[8] The Dongbaekrim (East Berlin) Incident emerged through an announcement by South Korea's Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) on July 8, 1967, that 194 South Koreans, including Lee Eung-ro, a painter who lived in Paris, and the Berlin-based writer Yoon Yi-

Within these circumstances, the South Korean community in West Germany either actively participated in the democracy movement against the dictatorship and supported the movement,[9] or threw their support behind the Park government's developmental authoritarianism. Even following South Korea's transition to democracy in 1987, these two groups are still at odds with each other.[10]

4. The Unification Experience and Views toward Unification among First-Generation South Koreans in Berlin

4.1 The Collapse of Borders: The Collapse of the Berlin Wall and German Unification through the Eyes of Korean Migrants

The collapse of the Berlin Wall occurred "suddenly" and was totally unexpected by both Germans and migrants who lived in the country. On the night of November 9, 1989, East Berliners who had crossed over the Berlin Wall were welcomed by West Berliners. The harsh levels of control over the wall had disappeared and the areas around the wall became similar to that of a festival. The collapse of the wall had become a gateway to a new post-Cold War era. Koreans residing in Berlin expressed their memories of the time in sentimental language and used words like "thrilling" and "joyful"; yet, their feelings were

sang, along with professors who had studied abroad in Europe and South Korean students who were studying abroad, were part of a North Korean spy ring in East Berlin. Members of West Germany's cultural and media spheres, along with local citizens and students, led the international movement to release the accused. The West German government's strong protests led the accused, who had received execution, life-in-prison, or 10-year prison sentences, to have their sentences commuted in 1969-1970.

[9] In the 1970s, the Committee for Constructing Democratic Society was founded by educated migrants, such as study abroad students and scholars, who contributed to the progressives, or we can say, the democratization movements, in South Korea. See Yi (2016) for detailed information.

[10] Recently, North Korean defectors have applied for refugee status in Germany. In the early 2000s, with the enactment of the US North Korean Human Rights Act, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and other European countries began to accept North Korean refugees for humanitarian reasons. However, the North Korean defectors who headed en masse to Europe at this time were either those who had already received citizenship in South Korea or were Chinese-Koreans. Following these revelations, European countries have drastically reduced the number of North Korean refugees they accept; however, there are North Korean defectors living in a refugee facility in Stuttgart. These defectors either lived in South Korea before moving to Germany for their children's education or, more rarely, came straight to Germany from China. In Berlin, there are North Korean refugees who left South Korea to study abroad. However, there are many fewer North Korean refugees in Germany than the 500 or so North Korean defectors who live in England's New Malden. North Korean defectors did not experience the division and unification of Germany, so this study did not include their perspectives.

complicated because they were "not sure how to react" to these "surprising" circumstances.

On November 10, the day after the collapse of the wall, a few members of the "Korean Women's Association in Germany," which was made up of nurses and had long been engaged in politically progressive activities, "got up the courage" to visit the site of the fallen Berlin Wall. At the site, they hung up a poster that said, "Korea is One."[11] They may have been one of the first "flash mobs" to link the collapse of the Berlin Wall with their own hopes for the end of Korean division.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall was an important historical moment where migrants from a divided country experienced a post-division era in their life. This is proven by the fact that, even though almost 30 years have passed, our interviewees vividly remember the night of November 9, 1989. "K," who worked as a nurse in West Berlin in 1972, explained her emotions that night.

> Ah, yes, I still remember that day. I always turned on the television when I came home. I worked with sick people, so I turned on the TV to think about something else. It was Thursday. The TV said that unification had arrived […] that the wall had fallen. People from East Germany just started coming over [into West Germany]. West Germans took the withered flowers they had in their homes and stood there, and even hugged people who weren't their relatives. I was really taken by that scene. Them giving flowers […] I don't remember how much I cried in tears while watching that. I wondered how great it'd be if Korea could unify like that. I went out to the city the next day and it was just full of people. There were a lot of people from East Germany and, from what I heard, there were no incidents at all. It was just peaceful unification. How great it'd be if Korea could experience that kind of unification, too. When I began thinking like that, I just started crying […] I just sat down and cried.

For Koreans living in Berlin, the end of the German division was closely related to the persisting division of the Korean Peninsula. It was part of their own narrative and they shared in the emotions felt by regular Germans. They did not turn the realities of Korea's division into someone else's problem, either. While Germans celebrated the collapse of the Berlin Wall, "K" put the situation in the context of Korea's own situation and hoped for the same change to occur on the Korean Peninsula.

The narrative of post-division that "K" shared was not just the physical fall of the wall; rather, it had a double-layered meaning. While adapting to a different culture after migrating abroad, Koreans residing in Berlin experienced layered border-crossing. While experiencing the realities of German society, they had experienced conflict with, the elimination of, and/or the restructuring

[11] See *Jaedokhankukyŏsŏngmoim* (Korean Women's Association in Germany) (2014) for the history of the social activism that the Korean women had led and organized in Germany.

of the anti-communist ideology, or "Red Complex," they had learned in South Korea.

4.2 The Structure of Feelings and Trans-Border Narratives

The German unification that Korean migrants in Berlin experienced, the comparisons they made with the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and their hopes for unification can be understood through the concept of Raymond Williams' "structures of feeling" (1973). Feelings in this context are slightly different than that of the intellectual exercise of "thinking"; however, they are mutually reinforcing spheres and are not in a confrontational relationship. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony is useful for understanding the ideology and discourse formed by dominant classes, while Williams' concept focuses on the sphere of feelings, where diverse change occurs from the bottom-up or from non-dominant classes. Williams proposes that the spheres of feeling can be divided into the dominant, residual, and the emergent. This structure of layered emotions originates from people's experiences. While an ideological system may be perceived homogeneously in a logical structure, the structure of feeling adds texture to that system. It becomes the engine for inducing internal change and becomes the concept to understand that change.

The first-generation Koreans that migrated to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s experienced the Korean War while they were young children and received anti-communist education before migrating to the center of the Cold War in Europe, Germany. Most Korean migrants arrived in Germany with ideologies and feelings dominated by the anti-communist ideology and by anti-North Korean sentiment. "P," a nurse from Daegu who arrived in West Berlin in 1966 told the researchers that "we received education meant to refine us before we left for Germany. The course didn't teach us about German culture or society. It was just focused on anti-communist education."

Anti-communist education in South Korea at the time was not aimed at imparting knowledge about Germany. Rather, it was aimed at ensuring Korean migrants were knowledgeable about what was prohibited and was meant to scare them with the punishment and harm they could face if they broke the rules. Their responses were thus based on emotions, not rationality. "C," who arrived in West Berlin in 1966, had a similar experience.

> Everyone was praying to themselves that I wouldn't be sent to Berlin. When it turned out I was going, everyone, even my family, was really concerned. They told me not to go into the Berlin subway station Friedrichstrasse. I was really scared each time I passed that station.

"P" and "C" were from the Korean War generation, but had not witnessed the horrors of the war themselves.

> When I was young, I was told to hide under the floors, so I did what everyone older than me was doing. No People's Army [North Korean army] soldiers

> came to my neighborhood so I really didn't know what the war was like. I was scared of the 'commies' and that fear stayed with me for a long time.

"P" and other interviewees found that their anti-communist sentiments stayed with them for a long time even after moving to Germany. The responses of Korean migrants toward the fall of the Berlin Wall were, compared to regular Germans, quite complicated. During informal talks with the Korean migrants, it was found that quite a few of them had immediately felt fear accompanied by surprise when they heard that the Berlin Wall had fallen.

"I was scared at first. For a long time, I didn't go into the neighborhood where the wall had been." This was one expression used casually by many Korean migrants during conversations with this study's researchers. Whether the migrants had participated in politically progressive activities or not, they all elicited similar responses to the fall of the Berlin Wall. One of them, "L," came to West Berlin in 1973 and has two children with her German husband, who is a doctor. She did not participate much in the local Korean community's activities and did not engage in politically progressive activities; however, her husband's brothers and relatives were in East Germany, so she witnessed familial exchanges across the two Germanies. When the Berlin Wall collapsed, however, she was full of fear that a whole wave of East Germans would flow into West Berlin and cause chaos. In short, "L"'s residual anti-communist sentiment emerged as a defense mechanism to the rapid changes in her social environment. The fear that accompanied her initial surprise at the fall of the Berlin Wall withered as she accepted the broader sentiments of West Germans, who had pursued change in the division system through contact with East Germans.

Koreans in Berlin adapted relatively quickly and participated in the post-division atmosphere, which was similar to that of a festival. This was because they had experienced Germany's division. This suggests that they had to complete their own "experiential review" of the division situation first before applying the experience of Germany's unification to the context of the Korean Peninsula or gain an understanding of it. There was an "iron curtain" that separated West and East Germany, but Germany had allowed considerable levels of exchanges, direct and indirect, that stood in contrast to the uncrossable armistice line that separated the two Koreas. Visits between families, exchanges of letters, listening to each other's broadcasts, and other low-level moves toward "unification" that the two Koreas have pursued were, in actuality, the reality of the "division" that existed between East and West Germany. Many Korean migrants experienced something that was impossible on the Korean Peninsula: crossing borders for personal reasons. For example, "P" experienced familial exchanges as her family from West Berlin visited those in East Berlin and vice versa, while "H" frequently went to East Berlin to participate in picnics put on by her local Korean church. Finally, "K" visited East Berlin with her German husband as tourists.

> I went to East Berlin two or three times in 1975, 1976 and 1977 […] for picnics. I would receive my visa in the morning – an "ein Tag," or single-day visa. I would arrive in East Berlin in the morning and have to return in the evenings. I had to change the money I'd use for the day before I left. It was like 20 marks or something those days. After changing my money, I would have to bring it with me [to East Berlin].

"K" crossed a border that she had learned initially never to cross or communicate over and her experience of going to a "picnic" in East Berlin likely created emotions that were borderless in nature. Migrants felt feelings of unfamiliarity and exhilaration because they felt they were breaking some kind of rule and these emotions were clearly seen on their faces as they spoke with the researchers. The migrants remembered their experience because of the new sets of emotions they had felt. These new emotions acted as a mechanism that allowed them to compare their current circumstances with those of their home country or, in other words, allowed them to reflect on the division of the Korean Peninsula.

> I travelled to [East Berlin] in that way […] I wondered when I could take a similar holiday on the Korean Peninsula and visit both sides. When can I go there [North Korea] and each cake? Or drink coffee […] I was so envious [of reunified Germany].

Germany and the Korean Peninsula were similar in some respects: both were divided countries and served as the front lines for the Cold War in their respective areas of Europe and Asia. The specific nature of their divisions was, however, different. The two countries were divided in different ways and only one had endured a horrible civil war. The levels of confrontation that had become embedded through experience and by institutions across the two sides also differed. Most research on German unification points out that comparing Germany and the Korean Peninsula is inappropriate because of their different historical backgrounds – in short, Korea's experience during the Korean War. However, Koreans who were born during the Korean War period and received anti-communist education before moving to Berlin experienced opportunities to reflect on the fact that remnants of their "learned" anti-communism and its harmful effects were roadblocks to their initial adaptation to life in West Berlin. In other words, their first careful visits to East Berlin or their repeated experience of crossing the land border into East Germany slowly, or even drastically, lowered the levels of anti-communist sentiment that they had. They also formed hope that the two Koreas would improve their relationship based on the German experience of tearing down borders. Borrowing Williams' concept of the "structures of feeling," Korean migrants formed a trans-border structure of feeling by experiencing life abroad.

The prefix "trans" here does not refer to the words "overcoming," "surpassing," or "after." Rather, it should be understood as a transitional experience. This is similar to the "trans" used in the process of change as interpreted in

post-socialism research. In other words, the trans-border sentiments formed by Korean migrants who lived in Berlin during the division of Germany could be said to have included the remnants of anti-communist ideology, the history of the Dongbaekrim Incident, and other European spy rings that involved their home country's military dictatorship, their fears about the National Security Law (NSL), or that they would be targets of surveillance. As such, their immediate responses and interpretations to the fall of the Berlin Wall were simultaneously similar to regular Germans yet different, which meant that the meaning of German unification to them was at once both more complicated and full of richness. They also had unique experiences while meeting with former East Germans after unification.

4.3 The Integration Process after Unification: Multi-Cultural Sentiments

The two Germanies reunited just one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. During the period of division, West Berlin, which was like an island in East Germany, witnessed an influx of people and capital. Even the hospitals where Korean nurses worked saw the arrival of East German nurses. The hospital was a cultural contact zone where the people from East and West Germany, and East Germans and Korean nurses, collided and negotiated their mutual authority and values in daily life. Korean nurses many times had relatively high status and authority in West Berlin hospitals.

Korean nurses generally thought that East German nurses had such little experience dealing with other kinds of people that they were unfriendly and looked down on Korean nurses. The former Korean nurses remember that East German nurses thought that the Korean nurses were seated lower on the hierarchy and gave them odd jobs to do and were high-handed in how they spoke to them. East German nurses did not understand why West German nurses received orders from Korean head nurses. East German nurses would frequently try to cause issues between German nurses and doctors and Korean nurses by talking behind their backs. Experienced Korean nurses were confused at the East German nurses' discriminatory way of speaking and the workplace conflict that they were suddenly faced with. As "L" states:

> I spoke slowly and they [East German nurses] understood. It was the first time for them to work with people like us. […] It was probably because they had developed socialist habits. Talking with them, though, showed that they had an innocent side. They just didn't know better.

"L" had trouble with some of her East German colleagues, but she understood the difficulties were due to cultural differences, not personal ones, the hierarchy they had learned in East Germany, and their general lack of sentimentality. As a result, she emphasized a "pure" temperament in her personal relationships. This showed the East German nurses that she cared about them. The

period of chaos in the early days of unification – including the currency reform, rise in taxes, fall in welfare, increase in population, and fast-paced urban development – put East Germans at a socio-economic level lower than most West Germans. "L" thus tried to understand the difficulties experienced by East German nurses, who likely found it difficult to accept that Korean nurses were considered to be at a higher status than themselves.

While Korean nurses were familiar with West German workplace culture and daily life, East German nurses found everything unfamiliar. "S" said in the interview that East German nurses who had moved to West Berlin then moved back to their original neighborhoods and had to face long commutes. When "S" asked the East German nurses why they did this, she was told that their original neighborhoods felt more like a community and were just better to live in.

West German social life divided working and private spaces and their accompanying relationships. Former East Germans, however, tried to maintain their socialist communal culture in response to the liberal culture of West Germany. One interviewee said that in East Germany there was, to borrow a Korean expression, more "*jong*" (affection) and that East Germans were "purer" than those who had become used to competition in the capitalist world.

Korean migrants' direct experience of unification has major implications for the Korean Peninsula. Their experiences provide a criterion for comparing small-scale social phenomena that will emerge in the integration of South Korean society – which, as a neo-liberal system, has rapidly transformed into a multi-cultural, multi-race society – with North Korean society, which has emphasized the "purity" of the Korean race. In short, North and South Korean people's pursuit of the "integration of their hearts" is not something that just occurs within one people, i.e., the Korean people. Koreans who live in Germany are showing that a country's multi-cultural and multi-racial circumstances can become a factor in national integration. This should not be overlooked in the context of South Korean society, which has witnessed a great deal of transnational movement. The sphere of the "heart" does not just include emotions and feelings but also encompasses the intellectual activities of perceptions and understanding. Because the concept of the "nation" is not just biological but also historical and cultural in nature, there are limitations to meetings that simply occur between North and South Koreans. Korean migrants' experience of unification in Berlin and their interpretations show the need for discussion on inter-Korean integration that considers the daily exchanges and communication with migrants who are a part of Korean culture.

4.4 Hopes for the Unification of the Divided Motherland in a Unified Germany

The fall of the Berlin Wall was a historical event that created hope among Korean migrants for the peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula. After the

June 15th North–South Joint Declaration in 2000 between Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jong Il, politically progressive activists tried to actively contribute to inter-Korean unification. From 2008 to 2017, when the logic of the Cold War resurfaced during the Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye governments, these activists were refused entry into South Korea, among other acts of suppression by these South Korean administrations. The activists nevertheless continued their efforts for peaceful unification through a variety of ways. They have formed a kind of "social remittance" through their solidarity activities abroad and participation in South Korea's unification movement.

Social remittances are different from financial remittances and refer to the intangible assets that migrants contribute to their home countries, such as new knowledge, values, lifestyles, and skills.[12] Since they are intangible, it is difficult to measure how much is being contributed from a quantitative perspective. However, there is a need to examine the characteristics of these social remittances through transformations in the perspectives of Korean migrants, the types of perspectives they hold, and their understanding of German unification. This study's participant observation allowed the researchers to summarize specifics about this social remittance phenomenon.

First, activists argue there is a need to resolve confrontation between the two Koreas through inter-Korean communication similar in nature to the sustained exchanges that occurred between East and West Germany during the German division. As explained before, Korean migrants in Berlin experienced entering East Germany without restrictions. There are feelings of confrontation between the two Koreas because of the Korean War, but activists argue that fears of North Korea are due to direct and indirect pressure on the migrant community by South Korea's NSL. Using the case of German division, they argue for divided family reunions, freedom of exchanges, and more exchanges through private organizations as possible ways to resolve the fictitious confrontational sentiments that exist between the two Koreas.

Second, activists emphasize that perspectives need to change to become more proactive and subjective toward Korea's relationship with world powers like the US. "M," who is a former miner, now in his 70s, and is working in the European office of the "Joint Committee to Put the June 15 Agreement into Practice," says that "there is a need for the South Korean government to actively reduce the tensions on the Korean Peninsula that are controlled by the US." His understanding of international relations leads him to believe that "Germany was also under a lot of US influence and still cares about what America's thinks, but [nonetheless] was not as severely dependent on the US as Korea is." They also criticize America's sanctions against North Korea, feel sadness about

[12] For more on the concept of social remittances, please see Levitt (1998, 2001) and Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011).

the Arduous March that North Korea suffered, and recognize that negotiations rather than opposition to nuclear weapons is the way to improve the US-North Korean relationship. These opinions are based on the understanding that the Kim Dae Jung government's Sunshine Policy, and its support for independent and tolerant policies toward North Korea, is similar to Willy Brandt's East Policy.

Third, the implications of West Germany's East Policy are not that Korean migrants in Germany look at unification as the end result, but rather as a process of shifting the paradigm. As described above, the interviewees explained that German unification "was a surprise." In other words, German unification was sudden. Migrants understand that unification is not the end result of efforts to reunify, but rather that the collapse of the socialist bloc and the Berlin Wall came about through policies that continued regardless of changes in government and were aimed at achieving exchanges between West and East Germany. On the other hand, they point out that South Korean society has long placed a priority on results in its socio-economic development, so it misses the importance of this process. Patience is required to conduct discussions that can lead to agreements. South Korean society has experienced compressed modernity, so it will not be easy to shift the paradigm through a long process. Nonetheless, activists and migrants have made attempts to share this important "value" with South Korean society.

The above discussion ultimately emphasizes that the experience of Korean migrants toward German division and unification is not something in the past but is linked meaningfully to the present and future. These temporal sentiments also prove that the "homeland" or "hometown" imagined abroad continues to exist through the past and into the future.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to reexamine and analyze the way first-generation Korean migrants in Germany experienced Germany's division and reunification. They left a divided Korea and came to a divided Germany and experienced "another Cold War" in both Asia and Europe. They were then witnesses to the country's rapid post-division process. However, Korea's division is still ongoing. The experience and interpretations of these migrants toward German unification cannot be separated from the current situation of the divided Korean Peninsula. Interestingly, however, the dominant keywords in the discourse on German unification in South Korea are not important in their own narratives about German unification. They place their own identities into a future, united Korea. Temporal borders have served to damage its significance.

The changing political situation in Germany and Korea along with Korean migrants' concept of borders, which must be considered, have become the

"field" of solidarity and transitional narratives. The trans-border feelings they possess ensures that their life histories will not just remain tragic narratives from the past. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, they began dreaming of inter-Korean unification and are now conducting ceremonies in Berlin's streets focused on Korea's unified future. These ceremonies can demolish the armistice line on the Korean Peninsula just like similar ceremonies did to the Berlin Wall, and they hope Korea's armistice line soon becomes so fluid that it can be crossed. Through these ceremonies, the word in German for "border," *Grenze*, and *Grenzgänger*, or "those on the border," have the meanings of "crossing," "surpassing," or "compatibility," as well as temporal and spatial meanings. Korean migrants are hoping that a unified Berlin, where physical barriers have been demolished, can become a space that connects Seoul and Pyongyang.

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